

George Bush

Director of Central Intelligence

at

Focus on Youth

America's Student Produced Press

Conference of the Year

on

29-30 August 1976

Our first question for Mr. Bush is from:

Seth Lerner: Mr. Bush, the Senate Intelligence Report on the Kennedy Assassination released in June charged that the CIA hid evidence and failed to follow up leads that suggested there might be a Cuban connection in the slaying. They also said the Warren Commission was never told about the CIA plots to kill Castro. Why weren't they?

George Bush: I wasn't here, I don't know and I don't think it did say we hid information; can you tell me the page number in which it said that?

Seth Lerner: I don't have the page number on me now.

George Bush: I will tell you that it didn't say that, and I don't know, we have cooperated fully, Senator Schweiker has told me he has received everything he wanted from CIA, so I would correct that -- the reason I jump on you on that is I keep reading things that are supposedly facts that aren't in relation to it, now, my view here at the Agency we will cooperate fully with Congress on these things. I think we have on this one and it is now being investigated or might be by the Senate Intelligence Committee. They will have our full cooperation and I having said that, I think much more important is building an intelligence capability second to none and I can't do it if I dwell on things that happened 14-16 years ago. I am informed on it, but I don't know what went through people's minds as to why they

did or didn't give information to the Warren Commission in 1960 or whatever it was -- I just can't answer the question.

Well, did the CIA neglect to follow up important leads?

George Bush: I just don't know. I haven't spent any time looking into it because there is nothing I can do about it except make darn sure this Agency cooperates fully with those who are charged with looking into it.

You have met Seth Lerner; also on this week's student panel are Dan Case, Tracey Counselman and Jerry Whitmar. Our guest is the Director of the CIA, George Bush. We will continue now with a question from Tracey Counselman.

Tracey Counselman: Mr. Bush, has it been possible for you to reorganize the CIA without impairing its role as an intelligence gathering Agency?

George Bush: Well, Tracey, there has been some major reorganizational changes taking place, the President promulgated a very important Executive Order. I have been here six months; the Executive Order came out about five months ago. We have implemented many important changes that safeguard in my view the rights of American citizens, and make the intelligence community while doing that stronger rather than weaker. For example, the Director of Central Intelligence for the first time really has the machinery now to make the community more efficient through control of budget. That sounds like a terribly boring thing and it is

but nevertheless it is very important, because when you control the purse strings, you control or make a lot of things happen or see that they don't happen. So there has been some very important organizational changes. There has been, I would say to get I think more to the guts of your question, there has been this disclosure -- the propensity for total disclosure of secrets is not conducive to a strong intelligence capability. Now most members of Congress are very reasonable about this. They recognize that there are such things as legitimate secrets, but for those who feel that everything should be public we have to resist that, the law says to me protect sources and methods and I am going to do, and you can't do it if you make the most sensitive information of this government available to others but I think we can have an intelligence capability the strongest in the world and still be sure that the rights of individual Americans are safeguarded. That's my goal. That's the goal of others here at CIA and I think we are doing pretty well on it.

Garth Ancier: Director Bush, all through late 1975 and early 1976, the public was repeatedly warned that excessive CIA disclosures by Congress would substantially hamper the effectiveness of the Agency. I am just curious -- has this actually occurred or was this just a tactic?

George Bush: It is much more than a tactic, and there have

been some disclosures that have been damaging, one covert operation was aborted because of a disclosure of classified information and I might say a properly constituted covert operation with the proper committees of Congress notified, but if you are a member of Congress and you are given access to a classified document or something that is a legitimate national secret, but in your conscience you feel that you should make it public, you can in my opinion do great damage to the national security. Now some members of Congress not for mischievous reasons but because of this thing feel they can make public information, and so to the degree they do that, they erode confidence abroad in our ability to keep secrets and thus people that would cooperate with the intelligence community refuse to do it. So the wanton disregard for secrecy is a bad thing in terms of intelligence. We are living in an open society. I recognize that we should cooperate as fully as possible but there are some things that must be secret.

Dan Case: The recent passage of Senate Resolution 400 creates a new and permanent intelligence oversight committee. Senator Daniel Inouye, Chairman of the new committee has announced that the oversight committee will "make every effort to assure that the intelligence operations of the U.S. are the best in the world but perform their necessary functions under the law." Director Bush in light of the remarks you have just been making, are you enthusiastic about cooperating with this committee?

George Bush: Yes, I think we are going to do well with this Committee, Senator Inouye and the ranking Republican member, Senator Baker are both very conscious of the need for security and yet they're both very zealous in their need to safeguard the rights of Americans, so I have no problems with the Committee. The Staff is disciplined in security and we will give them full cooperation and I don't worry about it. The problem I worry about more than that Committee is the fact that we report now not to one Committee in the Senate, to read the papers you would think at last we have consolidated oversight. I report to seven committees, three in the House and four in the Senate and a couple of more if they get the urge, been up to Bella Abzug, you talk about, she is not a qualified oversight committee, but in certain areas they impact on us, so we really report to seven oversight committees plus mavericks, you might say, and it takes a lot of endurance. I have been on the Hill 30 times, 30 official hearings in six months. We are trying to run the business here, and a good one and an important one and I want to cooperate, but I worry about proliferation of oversight not because I am unwilling to give the information but because of the one propensity for leaks and two, the amount of time consumed; it is inefficient.

Question: When we interviewed your predecessor, Mr. Colby, last year he told us that he thought the CIA Director should serve at the pleasure of the President "because I think that the CIA should not become an independent power of any state". Despite this, do you feel that politics is currently interfering

with the efficiency of the Agency?

George Bush: No, not at all, and I don't think that it has been charged that it is.

Question: Do you resent the continued oversight? You have mentioned seven committees, do you feel that this...

George Bush: No, I don't resent it at all, I resent a proliferation of oversight. What I want and what most people in Congress want and what the President wants and what most astute outside observers want is consolidated oversight. It will result in fewer leaks; it will result in more thorough and detailed oversight but there is no resentment on our part and there should be no (unintelligible) nobody should try to make political the CIA and they are not going to. In terms of whether the Director should serve at the pleasure of the President or not, look at it this way. If the Director didn't have the confidence of the President, the Director would not see the President and the intelligence that is so vital to the President unfettered by policy, intelligence that comes forward without policy constraints would not go to the President. So I think the Director should serve at the pleasure of the President but I'm somewhat open-minded on the other side of the question because I don't think a Director should you know be in forever, either. A fixed term has some appeal.

Question: Okay, so the Director should serve at the pleasure of the President but he should be free from politics. Does that mean that if Carter is elected, you will automatically be thrown out?

George Bush: I suggest that you go down to Plains, Georgia and ask Mr. Carter that question. But I would say this -- that I would automatically submit my resignation to him. Because much more important than gainful employment to me is the fact that the Director of Central Intelligence Agency must have the full confidence of whoever is President, without partisanship considerations and so I would refer you to Plains.

Question: Director Bush, as former Republican Committee Chairman, how do you see the November election shaping up?

George Bush: Nice try. But I just said that I was not going to get into politics, or that the CIA Director must stay out of politics and when I testified before the Senate I made very clear that when I have non-partisan jobs, China Ambassador, Ambassador to the United Nations, I think I know I have striven to serve in non-partisan fashion, and I think I have succeeded. Those are good questions and I have not surrendered my own point of view on these things, but if I answered them, you see, I would not be George Bush, private citizen, replying to you, private citizen. I would be Director of the CIA responding to a partisan political question and however many disclaimers I put before and after my answer, I would inject this Agency and myself into a hotly contested political partisan situation and I would be doing my Agency and intelligence a disservice so I am not going to answer your question.



Question: But, Mr. Bush, you have also had some rather partisan jobs, you were a Congressman --

George Bush: And did them with proud partisanship.

Question: That's correct. You were a Congressman for several terms, and you were the Chairman of the Republican Party, and that was one of the problems when you were nominated as Director of Central Intelligence, many people charged this was a political decision and you did not have any experience in intelligence as your predecessor Mr. Colby did. What are the qualifications for being a Director of the CIA?

George Bush: Well, let me start with all that stuff that came at the beginning of your question, because I answered it ad infinitum to the United States satisfaction, Senate and to the satisfaction of most members. I understood that question being raised, somebody who comes out of a partisan role although I was not serving in a non-partisan role at the time having run our U.S. Liaison Office in the Peoples Republic of China, perhaps one of the most sensitive diplomatic assignments we have, but nevertheless it seemed to me a very valid question. But why the Senate voted for me, and overwhelmingly democratic control Senate, was because I think they felt my experience in foreign affairs plus some felt my experience in public affairs, partisan or not, Congress and things were a benefit, you see, part of the problem that we have, will always be a problem here, is being sensitive to the concern of the people. The Agency got in trouble in the past, it wasn't because it had a Director that was involved in partisan politics.

I am not saying it was because it had one who wasn't. I am simply saying nobody could say that's why this Agency got in trouble. I think I have some feel for the constitution and constitutional constraints and I think I have some feel for the Hill and how and what it takes to what one can do, how one can affect his programs through Congress. But if I were, if some Senator found I was being partisan in this job, because I had been partisan in the past, they would blow the whistle and I shouldn't be in the job. So my view when you are in a non-partisan job, do it with a proud degree of partisanship. I mean no partisanship when you are in a partisan job do it with a proud degree of partisanship and there are plenty of people, Gov. Averil Harriman should he be disqualified from being in serving in non-partisan jobs because he was the Governor of his state, a democratic governor; heck no, and I don't think I should be.

Question: Well, I was thinking of another matter in another party and that is Larry O'Brien, who now holds a non-partisan job, he was a former Kennedy adviser, Post-Master General, Chairman of the Democratic Party and now he is commissioner of the NBA, National Basketball Association. Is he qualified to be the Chairman, the Director?

George Bush: Tell me his foreign affairs experience. I don't recall that exactly and in what is the consumer of intelligence, how much did he use, have you got that on this list there?

Question: Well no, he wasn't, he didn't have the foreign

George Bush: He never served in foreign affairs.

Question: No.

George Bush: Oh, maybe that's the difference then, maybe that's why he wasn't considered by at the time when they were looking for CIA directors, because you see I think being a consumer of intelligence, I think vast foreign affairs, particularly with the Peoples Republic of China, which is one of the most important components in the key intelligence questions, is very very fundamental and I think being Ambassador at the United Nations, is some qualification, knowing something about the world as it exists, dealing with at that time 132 countries and so maybe that's the difference.

The question incidentally was raised in a very partisan fashion at the hearings and the Senators were apparently overwhelmingly satisfied because they didn't buy that line that came out in the question just now.

Dan Case: If I may I would like to move out of politics for a moment and get back to the CIA. Before the new permanent Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, your new right hand man, Mr. Knoche, promised to work on guidelines to allow an audit by the GAO. Was this just to appease the Committee or are you actually willing and able to allow a GAO audit?

George Bush: I think GAO used to audit CIA sometime ago, and Mr. Knoche is a very seasoned intelligence officer, knows this information, day to day workings intimately and he has already started to work with the Inouye Committee on trying to see if they can work out some ground lines for that.

Dan Case: Is this audit going to be harmful to you in terms of the fact that for example your budget cannot be made public. Is this going to hurt your activities?

George Bush: I don't think GAO would do anything where they would make public without the agreement with CIA and the Congress about budget figures. You see both Houses of Congress, the Senate and the House, have voted by a 2 to 1 margin to not make public CIA figures. Now on the other hand we give total detail on our budget to the appropriate oversight committees of the CIA. That is something that people don't understand. Congress, the appropriate committees of Congress have every penny of what we spend so it would simply when you say make it public, I don't think GAO would come in here and go make public classified information.

Dan Case: To the best of your knowledge then has the CIA completely terminated all of its illegal domestic covert activities?

George Bush: They better have -- sure have.

Dan Case: What about FBI Director Kelley? He effectively said the same thing on this program just a little while ago and as you know he has been on the FBI a lot longer than you have been at the CIA and now reports come up his New York director has been hiding the facts from Kelley himself.

George Bush: Well, do you know that none of your classmates have considered any kind of a crime? I mean, one does everything one can do to administratively assure himself that he is fully implementing the Executive Order in complying with the

law. And I am satisfied that that is taking place. But let me put it this way. If I find out that is not the case, I will take prompt and forceful administrative action. You know it is a tough question; people ask it and I understand it and it worries you. Do you know everything that is going on? Is there tucked away something is wrong. I don't think so. I have enough confidence in the people that I have put into the key jobs here to think that they would fair it out, that kind of thing, but I don't want to sound wise about because you might wake up and find there is some problems that you have to take care of.

Gerry Whitmar: As a former Ambassador to the Peoples Republic of China, what do you think the eventual outcome of the Taiwan East situation will be?

George Bush: Now look, you are going to think that I am the world's most uncooperative guy with you but one of the things that the CIA Director is not going to do is to get into policy. I have strong feeling on the Taiwan question having served in Peking, but if I get into policy, and it diverges a little from the State Department, I would not be serving the intelligence community well and ask me one I can canswer on the community itself or you know current intelligence or something like that, because I hate to keep ducking your questions, but those two areas, politics and policy, when I give public speeches, how do you keep out of policy and still make a meaningful speech. I found I can do it by concentrating just on how the intelligence community works, but I can't answer that one because what I would say is in

answer to it, it's kind of a dull answer but I think that the United States still remains committed and I know it does to the fulfillment of the Shanghai communique and the Shanghai communique which is the guideline for normalization with the Peoples Republic of China and there are certain diplomatic things standing in the way of full normalization and until they are resolved it might not take place. On the other hand the Shanghai communique is valid today just as it was when it was negotiated several years ago.

Seth Lerner: I want to ask you a question about China. I don't think it relates to policy.

George Bush: Give it a try.

Seth Lerner: There used to be a story about a son who would ask his father what is the difference between an optimist and pessimist. The father would say the optimist reads Russian and the pessimist reads Chinese, so what I am wondering about right now looking at their perspective intelligence agencies, does the optimist read Chinese or Russian?

George Bush: Well, in terms of U.S. policy, the U.S. is sought better relations with both so we might, he might read both in terms of intelligence question it is a very valid one. China today is grossly inferior to the Soviet Union in terms of military might. You've got to leave out conventional ground forces there but so if you are worried though about bang and about nuclear capability and sophisticated weaponry,

clearly the Soviet Union is of more concern to the intelligence community in those areas, but in terms of the full equation, the full political equation, I would simply say in quest of better relations with both is a good place to be.

Seth Lerner: The British Intelligence Agency, MI-6, has been called by Stuart Alsop, it has been riddled like Swiss cheese with penetrators, as far as to my knowledge the CIA has never been penetrated by someone and I think the KGB has many times. Why hasn't the CIA been penetrated?

George Bush: Well, that is a tough one for me to answer. I don't think, wouldn't expect it is from lack of trying and one always worries in a job like this as to whether one has penetrations or not, and so I can't say beyond that. I would only say that we take the most strong security measures we can to see that we are not penetrated, or never had people get data from here. I could not tell you in all candor that it never happened but I just don't know the answer to it beyond that.

Seth Lerner: Well, without getting into any top secret information, what are the mechanics of checking out someone to be an infiltrator?

George Bush: Well, as you may or may not know, to work at the CIA you have to go through a rigorous, not unpleasant actually -- I passed -- a rigorous examination, field check, they call that, and it's you know, they talk to neighbors, talk to background people. You fill out forms, all kinds of forms.

Well, you have to do that if you work at the Agriculture Department but you got more of them here and also we have the thing called the polygraph and you take a lie detector test, and hopefully the people that run it, run it in such a way that they can tell liars. People that want to be here for reasons for what they say and it is kind of a scary feeling you take it, I did it but I believe in it, something as sensitive as working at CIA you should I think you should be willing to do it. Incidentally, we are getting a little flack from some people on that as to whether it is a violation of peoples rights but I don't happen to think it is.

Question: Director Bush, Americans have always been intrigued with internation spy and so is Hollywood, especially back in the post-W.W. II era, when we atom bomb secrets, and space races, but today in 1976 I am curious how important are the under-cover or clandestine activities of the CIA any more?

George Bush: Depends on what you mean by clandestine activities. If you are talking about covert action, for example, I mean overseas, if you talk about covert action, it is an infinitesimal part of our budget. I think Mr. Knoche publicly used the figure of something like two percent in his hearings as opposed to 50 or 60 percent of budget before, so it is a very small, but important, part of our action. Then in terms of human intelligence, you know everybody talks about spies, and all that kind of stuff. It's an important asset; it always will be because through human intelligence the only way you can measure intention, technical means of collecting



intelligence can get you a lot of facts, but it cannot read intention. So we are in a era where human intelligence may in terms of total budget or total resource be less than it was, but it still is very, very important.

Seth Lerner: Mr. Bush next year the CIA is going to have its 30th birthday. In those past 30 years, who do you think was the most efficient Director?

George Bush: Oh, I couldn't say, but I have great respect for my predecessors. I really couldn't say, because I have not been here long enough to get a feel for that and they all face different problems and I would have to say I couldn't quantify my admiration for my predecessors. It's high and I just couldn't judge them.